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# The Characteristics of Art Education in the Steiner School : Focusing on Handcraft Classes

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to clarify the characteristics of the art education in the Steiner school, while confirming how the ideas and philosophy of the founder Rudolf Steiner (Rudolf Steiner, 1861 ~ 1925) has been alive in classes of Handcraft (Handwerk) as a professional class. In order to achieve these challenges, I have referred some books of Steiner and teachers working in the Steiner school, and my experience of lectures and exercises, and observation of the class in the teacher training courses in Nuremberg Steiner school of Germany. As a result, it was confirmed that the method for harmonious development of what Steiner called " thinking ", "feeling" and " Willing" is reflected in the teaching practice of the specific modeling education, and the features of the art education in the Steiner school were found out.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Not a few children ask teachers how to draw. Then teachers make children get ideas by preparing documents or using imagemaps, but this method is a symptomatic treatment, and it doesn't seem to be contributive to the development of children's abilities. A big change in thinking is necessary to solve problems radically. In this sense, classroom practices in Steiner school will serve as a useful reference.

So the purpose of this study is to clarify the characteristics of the art education in the Steiner schools in Germany. This school, which is also called as a "free Waldorf School ", is founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, and it aims at educational activities based on the ideas and philosophy of Steiner, up to the present time, in 1080<sup>1)</sup> schools around the world.

Learning through art has been emphasized in this school, based on the words of Steiner that " Classes must be configured in such a way that they are artistic experiences" <sup>2)</sup>. There is a wish that learning through art Will be a source of joy<sup>3)</sup>, in the words. Art education of this school is supported by manual work of epoch (Epochenunterricht) and a professional class (Fachunterricht). The epoch is taught by the class teacher continuously 2 hours a day from the 1st to the 12th grade. The ability of basic modeling is developed in this epoch, because art activities such as drawing pictures or playing with clay are penetrated in classes, in which children learn over the four fields, such as language, mathematics, social studies and science. After the rest of 20 minutes after the end of the epoch, children tackle various professional classes such as painting, French, English, or physical education, which are taught by professional teachers of the subject. Among them, Handcraft, which deals with Art activities such as working on woodworking and statues , metalwork , stone carving of a three-dimensional problem, will be tackled in the fifth grade or upper grade.



(Figure 1) R. Steiner

## 2. METHOD

- The Literature of R.Steiner and of some teachers at the Steiner school.
- The Lecture of the teaching methods and methodology in the Teacher training course at the Rudolf Steiner school in Nuremberg.

(from September 1<sup>st</sup> , 2014 to July 31<sup>st</sup> , 2015)

- The Observation of Handcraft classes at the Rudolf Steiner school in Nuremberg.

①from March 12<sup>th</sup> to March 16<sup>th</sup> , 2012

②from October 16<sup>th</sup> and October 22<sup>nd</sup> to October 23<sup>rd</sup> , 2014

### 3-1. ART EDUCATION IN THE STEINER SCHOOLS

According to Steiner , educators must be conscious of " how to educate "thinking, feeling and willing" <sup>4)</sup>.Speaking on the basis of his human sense, the mental growth of human is done in the order that " at first feelings ties with the intention, then gradually disconnected from the willing, and associated with thinking, in the life of human beings" <sup>5)</sup>." Thinking " is what we generally call knowledge, and he is opposed to a class in which we cram this knowledge.He says that " feeling" and " willing " is " very similar " <sup>6)</sup>, but if we are to distinguish them, " feeling is an accomplished feeling <sup>7)</sup> " and " willing is a suppressed intention " <sup>8)</sup>.In other words, we could say that feeling is to have " sympathy " and " antipathy ", and, " willing" is the motivation and driving force to accomplish something on the basis of what we feel.

In Steiner education, classes are based on the children's developmental stage, which Steiner proposes, and " willing " and " feeling " are closely linked <sup>9)</sup> especially for children before entering elementary school.On the other hand, Steiner complemented "when small children is flapping their hands and feet, they don't display their willing, but they move in accordance with the feelings " <sup>10)</sup> . Therefore, in school education, at first, " we must develop the feelings and the willing <sup>11)</sup> ", which are closely tied. Then it is possible to harmonically develop a "willing" "feeling and "thinking" of human beings, by remembering that we "educate person as a whole <sup>12)</sup> " in the integrated education of 12 years. When these three elements likened to parts of the body, "feelings" is the trunk, " willing" is the limbs , and " thinking " is a head <sup>13)</sup>. I wanted to say here that, in Steiner education, it is important not only to make children understand by the sense of vision and by head, but also to make them learn by their body.

Then what is the method in which we do the education of "willing" in manual activities for the children in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade or in upper grade, whose "feelings" have been developed from the first year, in the method such as not giving excessively the sense of colour or images in order to develop imagination <sup>14)</sup> .First of all, according to Steiner, "we have to nurture the children's willing and feelings under condition that there are children's intuition and perception " <sup>15)</sup> .In other words, we nurture children's " feelings " and " willing ", working on children's intuition by making them do something repeatedly in unconsciousness, and bringing up the decisiveness and judgment by making them do something repeatedly in consciousness.Art, including molding activity is founded on repetitive tasks.It is expected that the art has an effect for development of the willing because we enjoy the art many times and it gives us a joy repeatedly <sup>16)</sup>.Also, becoming aware of the ego, "Ich", is also an act of " willing " and " feelings " <sup>17)</sup>.At first, children feel just sympathy or antipathy such as like, dislike, beautiful, or clean, for an event, but gradually they come to know themselves, for example what they like or dislike, and this understanding become the motivation, the interest and the positive attitude.

## 2-2. HANDCRAFT CLASSES AT THE STEINER SCHOOL NUREMBERG

So, we will take a look at the class example of the manual activities in Nuremberg Steiner school. We consider how the philosophy of Steiner education described above is kept alive in materials and tasks. The following diagram is the lists of the class issues of Handcraft of Nuremberg Steiner school<sup>18)</sup>.

Grade	Field	Tool	Subject
5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Woodwork	Wood hammer, Chisel, File	Animals
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	Woodwork	Wood hammer, Chisel, File, Sandpaper	A Spoon or a Spatula A house
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	Woodwork	Wood hammer, Chisel, File, Sandpaper	Wooden dish
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	Woodwork	Wood hammer, Chisel, File, Sandpaper, Plane	Ship, Wooden head
9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Claymodeling	×	Object with dent
	Metalwork	Hammer, Karasuguchi	Kupfer teller
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	Claymodeling	×	Sculpture of head
	Stone carving	Hammer, File	
11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Woodwork	Wood hammer, Chisel	Abstraction
12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Stone carving	Hammer, File	Abstraction

In the manual classes from fifth grade to eighth grade, woodworking is handled. All the children in from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade use almost same tools, such as chisel and mallet, with which they cut and shape. Children in the fifth grade select what animal they create on their own, and make their favorite animal. Spoon in the sixth grade, the bowl-shaped dish in the seventh grade, and yachts and face in the eighth grade are tasks. All of these are difficult challenge, because children must transform into the bowl-shaped object by shaving the inside and outside of a lump of wood. However, children are highly interested in the subject of creating something they can use, and Steiner stated as follows, "if the art created only to enjoy the beauty is able to transferred to the craft art, it would produce a very good result"<sup>19)</sup>. In other words, the subject by which children are able to be conscious of not only the beauty of shapes and colours, but also of sense of touch, such as the fit and touch of hands we feel when we use it actually. Children in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade deal with the clay. They use soil clay and transform it into various forms such as a sphere, a cube, the form with a dent, or a polyhedron. We make neck Figure by piling up the string made of clay, and pressing the cylindrical clay from outside and inside. Children create it with feeling that although it is a face they look every day, it is more difficult than they thought to create it with hands. In the last stage of the manual activities, the task is what we deal with modelling with stones which we cannot transform only by striking with a hammer many times, and abstract subject. The natural wood has hard places and colours different from other parts, and the knot, etc. Children dig the abstract form with motion from these characteristics of the material.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Some fragmentary case has been published in records and writings of lectures of Steiner, but it was not written concretely that what activity and method they take. But in the actual teaching, it was observed that children carry out the repeated activities in plenty of time, by being made to use repeatedly the same materials and tools, and by being given the task they cannot finish immediately. In addition, children judge and decide the size and the angle of chisel and angle, and

power adjustment by themselves as often as they move their hands, because they always have to work intuition when they fabricate without blueprints and sketches. Their feeling and thinking and preference are reflected in the finished work. We can say that the fact that they can confront themselves through the creating.

From the above, modeling activities are conducted in the class of manual activities of the fifth grade in order to work on children's "feeling" and "willing". In addition, tackling with creating, with feeling the antipathy because of the gap between the actual work and the ideal, sense of accomplishment and joy which they feel when they can create in a way they thought, empathy, and so on help develop "feelings". Making the children be eager to and active for the learning and creating, influencing the "willing", and nurturing "thinking" by being made to be accustomed to the materials and tools and by developing technique of expression in the activities accord with the philosophy of harmonious development of "willing", "feeling", and "thinking", at which Steiner school aims. In that sense, we can say by examining the class of art education, that the characteristic of the art education in this school is found in the point that it is the specifically and practical Art activities which have in view the harmonious character building under the outlook for long-term life, rather than it is the mere activity for only one field of art.

Thus, in the art education is Steiner school, teachers motivate children to learn something and promote children's formation and growth as human beings, by planning for class as they are conscious of working on "will", "feeling", and "thinking", and contrive themes, materials, and time schedule. I think there is a hint for a radical solution in this point.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- 2) R.Steiner, "Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik" 1968, S.164.
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- 5) Steiner, a.a.O., "Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik", S.124.
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- 13) Ebd., S.186.
- 14) Steiner, a.a.O., "Die Erziehung des Kindes", S.31-33.
- 15) Ebd., S.124.
- 16) Ebd., S.89.
- 17) From September 2014, I have observed some Handcraft classes when I was enrolled in a Teacher training course of the Steiner school in Nuremberg. I made this Table based on the information there.
- 18) Ebd., S.143.
- 19) R.Steiner, "Erziehungskunst Methodisch-Didaktisches", 1975, S.42.

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